

Here on the John Day, I praise one
who acted on his own to fence away the herds
that trample everything to dust.
His river reach blooms with new green growth,
a promise of trees and clearer water
for the last survivors of once great runs,
and here and there a song starts up,
meadowlark or mourning dove,
one note, then another, become
a chorus as heaven's light breaks
in the mind
of every waking thing.
I think of grass beginning
to sprout between wire and river,
harbinger of trees and eventual shade,
this guardian net for steelhead and salmon,
this steel-thorned fretwork
the wind leaps through.

From Ode to the John Day